

News release

For immediate release

Scientists tackle poverty in South Asia

Call for Stakeholder Participation for the Ecosystem Services and Poverty Alleviation Study in South Asia (ESPASSA)

Scientists are investigating the links between ecosystems and poverty in South Asia to identify ways in which the poor are dependent on the services provided by ecosystems. These ecosystem services include things like food, clean water, building materials and traditional medicines. By identifying and prioritizing interventions that will improve the availability of ecosystem services to the poor, these scientists aim to make a significant contribution to the fight against poverty in one of the world's poorest regions.

“Poverty is so pervasive in South Asia that achieving the first Millennium Development Goal of poverty reduction is not only influenced by success in this region, it is dependent on it. ESPASSA is making an important step towards achieving the MDG by establishing an underpinning framework for the development of projects within the region to bring about beneficial change, with the ultimate goal of poverty alleviation. The ESPASSA project is particularly exciting because the methodologies and techniques developed within this region will also have global relevance and could be used to help the fight against poverty in other regions of the world.”-
Mr. Mike Wood, Institute for SWIMMER, University of Liverpool, Co-manager of the ESPASSA project

Like the UK India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI), which is investigating the effects that climate change will have on Ecosystems in South Asia, ESPASSA is a collaborative interdisciplinary project that draws on the combined expertise of scientists within the UK and South Asia. Focusing on five countries in the India and Hindu Kush- Himalayan Region (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal & Bhutan), ESPASSA is synthesizing information on the current status of and trends in the ecosystem services that are most important to the well-being of the poor. The ESPASSA scientists are also assessing the ways in which direct drivers, such as climate change and monsoon variability, and indirect drivers, like demographic dynamics and trade and investment measures, affect the flow of ecosystem services and hence the impact of these drivers on poverty. The baseline information established through ESPASSA will be used to underpin the development of strategic initiatives to instigate changes, as well as to assist in measuring their impact.

ESPASSA has placed a strong emphasis on stakeholder engagement to ensure that the outputs of the project meet the needs of those in the region. Stakeholder workshops are being held in each of the five countries being studied and a wider stakeholder engagement programme is being operated through the project website (www.espassa.org). Specifically, ESPASSA is seeking to identify the information and knowledge that stakeholders need to improve ecosystem management and to tackle poverty in the region. ESPASSA wishes to engage with as many stakeholders as possible and anyone who wishes to contribute their views or learn more about the project is encouraged to visit the website (www.espassa.org) for further information.

Funding provided by.



Partners



ESPASSA will deliver a full report on its findings in early 2008. These findings will include an identification of key research requirements and areas in which skills and knowledge exchanges can be used to build capacity with the ultimate goal of developing further regional initiatives to reduce poverty in the face of climate change and other pressures on ecosystems.

ESPASSA is led by Dr. R. K Pachauri from TERI in India and consists of over 25 scientists from four institutions from within the region and the Institute for Sustainable Water, Integrated Management & Ecosystem Research (SWIMMER) from the University of Liverpool in the UK. The regional institutes are; The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)- India, Building Resources Across Communities (BRAC)- Bangladesh, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI)- Pakistan and the World Conservation Union (IUCN). The project is funded by three UK agencies (Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), Department for International Development (DFID) and Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)), who are using the project outputs to facilitate the development of an "Ecosystem Services and Poverty Alleviation (ESPA)" programme.

Notes to editors

For more information or to set up interviews, please contact:

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Photos (audio/video material, reports) are available at/from: www.espassa.org

Also by contacting the two manager of the project, Dr A Mishra (TERI University) and Mr. M.D. Wood (SWIMMER)

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About the World Conservation Union (IUCN)

Created in 1948, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) brings together 83 States, 110 government agencies, 800 plus NGOs, and some 10,000 scientists and experts from 181 countries in a unique worldwide partnership. The Union's mission is to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable.

The Union is the world's largest environmental knowledge network and has helped over 75 countries to prepare and implement national conservation and biodiversity strategies. The Union is a multicultural, multilingual organization with 1,000 staff located in 62 countries. Its headquarters are in Gland, Switzerland.

More information can be found at www.iucn.org